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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0373
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAR ES SALAAM 000206

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#) [TZ](#)
SUBJECT: TANZANIA: MINISTER MEMBE BRIEFS AMBASSADOR GREEN
ON COMOROS PLANS, ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS

REF: STATE 032645

Classified By: Ambassador M. Green for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Bernard Membe, confirmed to Ambassador Green that the Tanzanian forces that assisted with the invasion of Anjouan will stay in Comoros through the elections and likely longer to maintain peace and train Anjouan gendarmes to prepare for integration into the Comoran army. While expressing his strong appreciation that the United States supported the African Union (AU) action to oust Col. Mohamed Bacar, Minister Membe stated that humanitarian aid will likely be needed for the Anjouan islanders "who appear to be in need of many basic necessities." He described mopping up operations as going well, with all but 47 militia out of the 350 armed militia who had been protecting Bacar, accounted for, and over 1,500 weapons turned in. Membe was unable to respond to Ambassador Green's request to outline and give a timeline for how the U.S. can assist from here forward. He said a high-level meeting would be held between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Chief of Defense of the Tanzanian Peoples Defense Force (TPDF) the evening of April 1 to discuss these details, and promised to give the Ambassador a full report on April 2. Minister Membe did not have current information on whether or not Tanzania's two to three landing craft were already in the Comoros.

12. (C) Membe confided that for the past two days, President Kikwete has been focused on Zimbabwe, reaching out to South African President Mbeki and to PM Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. Membe has spoken to the foreign ministers of South Africa, Zambia, and Mozambique to discuss that the AU and SADC should not rush to recognize whatever government may be installed in Zimbabwe until the facts about election tabulations are clear. Membe mentioned the possibility of calling a SADC emergency meeting should the Zimbabwe results indicate that the election was not fair. The delay in an announcement by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission is increasing tensions in Harare. He noted that opposition

party members met with the Tanzanian Ambassador in Harare on March 31 asking him to convey to President Kikwete as the AU Chairman that the elections were being manipulated and the AU should intervene. End summary.

Comoros

13. (C) Ambassador Green told Minister Membe that the United States was ready to assist Tanzania in the aftermath of the Anjouan invasion, but "we need to have clear lines of communication on a day to day basis." Membe apologized that he had not kept the Ambassador fully informed, but events had moved very quickly. Membe apparently believes that the U.S. will be able to reimburse Tanzania for some of the cost of moving assets to Anjouan during the initial March 24-25 operation. Going forward, Membe had understood from his phone conversation with A/S Jendayi Frazer that the United States would be able to assist with the large ship that could transport two to three Tanzanian landing craft. However, Membe was not able to confirm (even after requesting his assistant to contact the TPDF directly) whether the landing craft had already been moved to Comoros or were still in Tanzania. He said his staff would meet with top TPDF leadership the evening of April 1, and a full report, including the logistics needed from the USG, would result from that meeting.

14. (C) Membe recounted that President Kikwete deeply appreciated the United States' support and strong leadership within the P-5 so that the AU's intended intervention in Comoros did not have to go to the UN Security Council. He downplayed the efforts of South Africa to block the invasion, stating that "now that it has gone well, the South Africans

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are commending that the exercise was well executed." In Anjouan, the Tanzanian, Sudanese and Comoran forces have taken into custody 278 of the 350 militia who had defended Bacar. Fifteen of the militia had fled to Mayotte with Bacar, and 9 to 10 others appeared to have perished in a car burning in one village; 47 remain unaccounted for. He also noted that a total of 1,562 weapons along with ammunition have been turned into the Tanzanian, Sudanese and Comoran headquarters by the Anjouan police and gendarmes without any fatalities.

15. (C) According to Membe, the French have moved Bacar to Reunion "for his own safety" while a Mayotte court considers Bacar's asylum request since there have been demonstrations against him in Mayotte, Anjouan and Moroni. Membe expressed his frustration at not getting what he believed to be a straight story from the Government of France (GOF), recounting several instances including a helicopter crash near Bacar's village on Anjouan, and the fact that weapons found in Bacar's home had "Embassy of France Moroni" stamped on them. He also had learned that the Government of Comoros had put out a warrant for Bacar's arrest and forwarded it to the GOF, but his most recent letter from the French "remains silent about this warrant." Minister Membe was not sanguine that the question of "what to do with Bacar will be easily solved. He noted that even if Bacar went to a country or territory not under the control of France, extradition laws could apply.

Foreign Ministry not in the logistics loop

16. (C) Ambassador Green pressed for details from the Minister on when and where a ship would be needed to move the landing craft per the GOT request. The Ambassador explained that one window of opportunity was open within the next 24 hours; otherwise the operation could not commence until April 12. Membe asked his assistant twice to make a call to the TPDF and get the information Ambassador Green was requesting, but the only reply he received was that a meeting would be held later in the evening. While Membe understood that the landing craft in question were still in Tanzania, the Embassy's Defense Attache Office had heard directly from TPDF

Chief of Operations and Logistics on March 31 that USG assistance was needed to bring two landing craft back to Tanzania from Anjouan.

¶17. (C) Membe was clear that the Tanzanians are in Comoros for the long term, at the very minimum through the elections that are required by law to held within the next 90 days. Furthermore, the Tanzanian troops will stay for whatever time frame is needed to train the Anjouan police and gendarmes and to assure their integration into the Comoran army. In response to Ambassador Green's inquiry, Membe admitted that Tanzania would likely look to the U.S. for assistance not only for the short-term movements of the landing craft, but throughout the period of transition to a better form of democracy in the Comoros. He believed that the constitution of Comoros needs to be closely examined to ensure long-term viability, and noted that the AU Parliament and its advisors stand ready to assist. "To have a country with three presidents is just not possible," he emphasized. Membe also noted that ballot boxes for the elections are already in Comoros, but robust support from the international community is needed for observers, election training, and adequate training for the police.

Comment

¶18. (C) Clearly, neither Minister Membe nor his MFA staff had been kept fully informed about details of military logistics in the Anjouan incursion, and thus were unable to answer the Ambassador's inquiries. His focus for the last week appears have been on ascertaining whether the GOT is getting the full story from the French government concerning its position toward Bacar. He mentioned that he had spoken to the French Ambassador nearly every day during the past two weeks, either

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by phone or in person. It was also clear that Tanzania is going to be in the Comoros for the long haul; while Membe mentioned that up to half of the Tanzanian forces could return home, many will stay until a "stable democracy" is in place in Anjouan and the Comoros.

Zimbabwe

¶19. (SBU) In response to reftel points, Minister Membe assured the Ambassador that President Kikwete is closely monitoring the situation in Zimbabwe, both as the AU Chairman and from Tanzania's key position in SADC. Kikwete contacted President Mbeki, and had spoken on March 31 to PM Gordon Brown. Membe himself reached out to his SADC counterparts to urge caution before making any statement, once an election outcome is announced in Zimbabwe.

¶10. (C) Membe repeated several times that the reports coming to the GOT indicate that situation in Harare is very tense. He had heard that Tsvangirai has a slight lead over Robert Mugabe and that Makoni has received about five percent of the vote. The GOT is extremely concerned about retaliation against Makoni since his break-away from the mainstream ZANU party could be the factor that pushes Tsvangirai over the top. Also Tanzania is concerned that the longer an announcement of the presidential winner is delayed, it increases the possibility of vote tampering as well as allowing tensions to rise.

¶11. (C) Membe's best estimate is that the results announcement would be made at night "since large crowds are less likely to gather in the darkness." The GOT is also concerned with Mugabe's recent statements that he would hand the government to the military before he would accept an opposition victory. However, Membe admitted that there is a slight chance that Mugabe could concede victory or offer a position in the government to the opposition candidates. Ambassador and Minister Membe agreed to keep in close contact on Zimbabwe as well, and cooperate to protect the human rights of the candidates as well as of all Zimbabwean

citizens.
GREEN